SOCI 1306: Social Problems

Discussion Question Prompts

Instructions:

For each chapter, you must respond to at least two of the discussion topics, and reply to at least two other student responses, following the assessment guidelines posted in the Course Orientation module.

Students’ post and responses should be at least one paragraph (4-6 sentences) in length. The responses must be thoughtful and pose new ideas or questions. The response will not earn credit if you 1) simply summarize what your classmate wrote, or 2) tell them good job on their response. Please review the discussion board rubric.

Discussion Board Rules of Etiquette:

What you write is public—respect your audience and be mindful of proper netiquette. Netiquette, also known as 'net etiquette,' includes using language free of profanity, proper tone and mechanics (including full sentences), as well as courtesy and respect for others' opinions. Instructors may interpret breaches of netiquette as "disruptive behavior." Remember to always respect others. You are expected to be courteous when posting discussion question answers and responses. Inappropriate postings to the discussion will be removed and will cause the author to receive a 0 for that assignment. Examples of inappropriate posting would include, but not be limited to:

* Vulgar language
* Derogatory statements
* Anything you wouldn’t be proud to say in front of mom/grandma/\*important person\*

1. **Chapter 1 Understanding Social Problems**

Discussion Questions:

**Topic 1:** Unemployment is a serious problem in our society. How might someone (not a sociologist) using the individualist perspective explain what causes this problem? How might a sociologist explain what causes this problem? In addition, choose one of the theoretical perspectives (functionalism, conflict, or symbolic interactionist), and suggest how the problem might be viewed from that perspective.  
  
 **Topic 2**: Do you believe that external social forces are more or less important than individual internal characteristics and motivations in shaping our lives? Explain. Incorporate something you learned from reading the lecture and/or textbook into your answer.   
  
**Topic 3**: How should we determine what is or is not a social problem? Who actually determines if something is a social problem? Does there need to be a certain number of people impacted for something to be considered a social problem? Does there need to be a certain group of people who are impacted for something to be considered a social problem?

1. **Chapter 2 Social Class & Poverty**

Discussion Questions:

**Topic 1**: Conduct a search of the Internet to find information related to the topic of social class inequality. For example, you could look for information about distribution of income, distribution of wealth, poverty in the U.S. or other countries, the minimum wage, the salaries of CEOs, or any other topics related to social class inequality discussed in the text and/or lecture. When writing your posting to the class, include the address of the site, what you learned from reading the information, how the information might relate to the sociological view of inequality, and whether you believe that the information at the site is valid. Demonstrate an understanding of the information about evaluating internet sources at the posted tutorial.

**Topic 2**: In spite of the overwhelming evidence of the impact of inequality on people’s life chances (such as health, education, standard of living, etc.), most Americans hold to the belief that people’s success in life is due primarily to their own individual qualities and motivations. Why is this individualistic view so widely accepted? What could be the benefit of thinking about this issue more sociologically? Refer to course material.

**Topic 3:** What did you observe about social class stratification from watching *Inequality for All*? What do you think what the most important *sociological* point from the film? Why?

1. Chapter 3 Racial Inequality

Discussion Questions:

**Topic 1:** As you have gone through your life and dealt with people who could have power over you (such as teachers, principals, school counselors, employers, bank managers, doctors, attorneys, etc.), have these people tended to belong to your own racial group, or a different racial group? How could this have had an impact on your perceptions and experiences? Now, take the other view. If these powerful people tended to be from your group, discuss how your perceptions and experiences might have been impacted if they weren’t. If these powerful people tended not to be from your group, discuss how your perceptions and experiences might have been impacted if they were. Refer to the concept of “white privilege” described in the textbook. I’m hoping that you will dig deep, and think seriously about the impact of race and power on people’s lives and perceptions.

**Topic 2**: What did you observe about the impact of discrimination from watching the video *13th?* How can you be more vigilant against institutional racism? Who would you want to watch this video? Why? What is something that you would want them to learn? Why?

**Topic 3**: After watching *13th*, Consider if you ever reflect upon the systematic privileges you may or may not experience because of race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, religion, physical/mental abilities, etc.? Or, consider if you have ever had to confront direct or systemic racism in your life? If so, how were you affected?

1. Chapter 4 Gender Inequality

Discussion Questions:

**Topic 1:** Conduct a search of the Internet to find information about gender inequality in other nations. For example, you could look for information about access to education and employment, differential application of laws, power in the home, workplace, and political institutions, or any other topics related to gender inequality discussed in the text and/or lecture. When writing your posting to the class, include the address of the site, what you learned from reading the information, how what you learned compares to the U.S., and whether you believe that the information at the site is valid. Demonstrate an understanding of the information about evaluating internet sources at the posted tutorial.

**Topic 2:** What do you think is the most important advantage, privilege, or benefit that men enjoy in the United States? What do you think is the most significant cost or disadvantage that men experience? Can this be changed? Base your response on course material, and your own experiences that relate to the sociological perspective.

**Topic 3:** What are your own observations in terms of sexism in language, media, housework, child care, and the workplace? How important are these issues? Prepare examples, and demonstrate a knowledge of the course material.

1. Chapter 5 Sexual Orientation & Chapter 9 Sexual Behavior

Discussion Questions:

1. Chapter 6: Aging and Ageism

Discussion Questions:

1. Chapter 7: Drugs and Chapter 8: Crime & Criminal Justice

Discussion Questions:

**Topic 1:** After watching *Crack*, what was the biggest take away in regards to the war on drugs and mass incarceration? What do you think is the most important message from the documentary? How does it relate to our course? Provide two terms (define & explain) that relate to class material.

**Topic 2:** Prior to watching *Crack*, what did you know about the war on drugs? How is it still impacting U.S. society today? Pull from the film and from lecture notes.

**Topic 3:** How does *Tutwiler* relate to our course? Think critically and deeply about this. Provide at least 2 terms/theories (bold the term you select) from the course to describe how this documentary relates to what we have discussed so far this semester. Make sure that you define the term AND explain how the term relates to the video.

1. Chapter 11: Education

Discussion Questions:

**Topic 3:** After reading the material in text on education, what have you learned about a quality education? Think about your own experiences with the educational institution (K-12). Do you feel that you received a high quality education? Why or why not? What specifically do you feel worked well to help you to achieve academic excellence? What could schools do to help all children to achieve academic excellence?

1. Chapter 13: Health Care

Discussion Questions:

**Topic 1:** Do you think the U.S. should move toward the national health insurance models found in other Western nations? Why or why not? Refer to textbook material.

**Topic 2:**